

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000254

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PM:JSHAUNFIELD, AF/RA:MBITTRICK, JWALSER,
AND L

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KOMC](#) [NI](#) [ECOWAS](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: SMALL ARMS/LIGHT WEAPONS

REF: A. 01 ABUJA 1244

[1](#)B. 01 ABUJA 1249

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter; Reasons 1.5 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request; Please see para 11.

[1](#)2. (U) SUMMARY: During a January 3 conversation with PolMilOff, the Chairman of the Nigerian Committee on the ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms/Light Weapons (SA/LW) Musa Yahaya said Nigeria was making progress combating SA/LW proliferation, but much more needed to be done. He explained a three-phase approach to informing government agencies and the public about SA/LW, and outlined his committee's plans for 2002, including additional destruction efforts and a train-the-trainer program for agencies that manage borders. Confirming that most illicit weapons enter Nigeria from neighboring states, Yahaya asked that the USG (and other supplier states) assist by having arms exporters comply with the ECOWAS Moratorium, which requires a waiver from ECOWAS before allowing export of SA/LW to Nigeria (and other ECOWAS member-states). Yahaya also requested technical assistance to develop an arms database for Nigeria. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (U) During a January 3 call by PolMilOff, Chairman of the Nigerian National Committee on the ECOWAS Moratorium on Small Arms/Light Weapons Musa Yahaya confirmed that Nigeria had destroyed arms at the Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) facility and dumped ammunition off the continental shelf during July 2001. He stated that another round of destruction would be underway soon, now that a quantity of illicit arms sufficient for a destruction effort had been collected by border agencies and the police. Turning to ECOWAS efforts, Yahaya stated that eight of 15 ECOWAS members had fully implemented the moratorium, and that the other seven needed only to update their national legislation. (COMMENT: Yahaya may have been painting too rosy a picture of most member-state actions. However, recent actions he noted, such as Senegal's and The Gambia's formation of national committees, in November and December respectively, are noteworthy. END COMMENT.)

[1](#)4. (U) Yahaya focused most of his remarks on the committee's efforts on training and public education on the SA/LW issue. (NOTE: Nigeria's national committee is seated within the Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa. END NOTE.) He hoped to have three phases of training: the first for military, security and border services; the second for civil society, focusing on youth; and the third for the country's opinion leaders, both political and traditional. The first phase of training in Abuja in December was postponed for lack of funds. Yahaya recalled the ECOWAS SA/LW train-the-trainer event in November 2001 in Dakar (supported by Canada), and said the first Nigerian training phase would follow its format. By targeting the military, security services and border agencies (such as immigration and customs), Phase I was intended to increase Nigeria's ability to prevent illicit SA/LW crossing porous borders. (NOTE: Nigeria's SA/LW problems stem from illicit arms smuggled from neighboring states, primarily Chad and Cameroon, but also Benin. END NOTE.) Phase I training would focus on: How to identify illicit arms shipments; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; the legal aspect of the ECOWAS moratorium, particularly as they relate to national laws; human rights law; the rights of refugees; the scope of proliferation; cooperation between armed forces and security agencies to reduce SA/LW proliferation.

[1](#)5. (U) What Nigeria most needed from supplier states, Yahaya stated, was support in managing the legal flow of arms and ammunition into ECOWAS countries. To import a quantity of arms and ammunition to Nigeria, a dealer (who must be licensed by the Presidency) sends a quantity and type specific application to the Nigerian ECOWAS Moratorium

Committee, which seeks an ECOWAS waiver on the dealer's behalf. ECOWAS sends the waiver application to member-states. If there are no objections or comments after one month the waiver is approved (Ref A). The dealer can then import and sell the arms and ammunition, but must inform the committee of the identity of all buyers and specific information about the weapons purchased, such as serial numbers and quantity.

16. (C) Yahaya explained that a database of weapons and ammunition could enable the committee to play a positive role in identifying weapons used in crime or other acts that threaten security (a prime area of concern for Nigeria). Speaking frankly, Yahaya admitted that no Nigerians had applied for arms importation waivers yet, but the committee had "a good idea" of who was importing arms, and planned to work with the police and other security agencies in 2002 to enforce the program. Dealers who did not follow the rules would, at a minimum, lose their licenses. Meanwhile, supplier states, such as the U.S., could help Nigeria by confirming that importers had proper ECOWAS waivers before allowing weapons shipments to Nigeria.

17. (U) Yahaya also requested technical assistance from donor countries. Not only did the committee hope to create a computer database of arms (containing the information on legal imports described above), it wanted to establish zonal, state, and eventually, local government area offices. While he noted a need for financial assistance to hold seminars such as Phase I of the train-the-trainer program, he also requested technical assistance for training and computers to establish the arms database and to equip zonal offices. Finally, Yahaya mentioned vehicles, explaining that when an illicit shipment is intercepted, his committee finds it difficult to get from Abuja to the border crossing where the shipment was captured.

=====
COMMENT
=====

18. (C) The impact of small arms on security in Nigeria should not be underestimated (as the assassination of Minister of Justice Bola Ige and recent inter-communal clashes confirm). However, Nigeria has a very limited arms production capacity, and, improvised single-shot long guns aside, what Nigeria does produce is very expensive. Illicit arms enter Nigeria primarily across porous borders from neighboring states, and through illicit sea shipments through the ports. Ideally, the police, immigration and customs service could carry out the moratorium committee's work at the borders, obviating the need for committee travel.

19. (C) Nigeria has made strides in meeting the "national level" steps identified by the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons of July 2001. These accomplishments were already in the queue as a result of previous ECOWAS efforts. For the ECOWAS moratorium to be successful, weapon supplier states should seek to comply with the ECOWAS approval process by confirming a waiver has been received from ECOWAS before allowing the export of arms shipments into the sub-region. While this will not stop the illicit trade, it will give member-states knowledge of weapons entering their territory and give them the ability to track these weapons when used for criminal purposes.

110. (C) To help reduce the number of illicit arms entering Nigeria, the USG could consider a two-prong approach. First, to reduce the number of illicit weapons circulating in the sub-region, we should consider assistance to ECOWAS member-states (plus perhaps Chad and Cameroon) for arms destruction, focusing first on states unable to fund destruction on their own. The second task would be to provide direct assistance to national ECOWAS Moratorium Committees for train-the-trainer programs that enhance the ability of enforcement agencies to carry out interdiction (the military, police, State Security Service, immigration and customs). This training assistance could be provided bilaterally through national ECOWAS moratorium committees, or for multiple states' border and security agencies through ECOWAS. Helping to prevent illicit weapons and ammunition from entering Nigeria, while also reducing the number of illicit arms in the region-as-a-whole could begin to reduce the availability of SA/LW in Nigeria, which in the long-term should have a positive impact on security conditions here.

111. (C) ACTION REQUEST: We request that the Department provide guidance on our policy regarding adherence to the ECOWAS waiver mechanism prior to allowing arms exports from

the U.S. into the West African sub-region. Additionally, Department may want to consider establishing a new procedure to promote better cooperation with the ECOWAS mechanism. One possible method would be to cable the information on an export request to the Embassy in the importing state, which might then confirm that a waiver has been granted through the state's national committee. Embassy Abuja could also confirm the waiver with the ECOWAS Secretariat, if a national committee is not yet active. END ACTION REQUEST.
Jeter